

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH BRIGADIER GENERAL DAVID PHILLIPS,
DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL, CIVILIAN POLICE ASSISTANCE TRAINING TEAM SUBJECT: IP
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MR. HOLT: I believe we've got enough folks to get started here, and
everybody is ready. We've got Lieutenant Colonel Gataski (sp) with General
Phillips.

And, Colonel, the floor is yours.

LT. COL. GATASKI (sp): Hey, good morning, everybody. Thanks --
thanks, Jack.

Hey, before we start, just real quickly, want to make sure that we --
we stay on topic, please. General Phillips is an expert in the areas of IP
recruiting, Baghdad expansion and, of course, IP officer training. So please
stay in his lane of comfort and expertise. We won't talk any operational issues
today, and certainly we have to look out for our operational security, so if you
guys ask any questions that are operationally sensitive, the general obviously
will pick that up, and he'll -- he'll have to refrain from answering those.

But otherwise, I'm ready to go. Jack, do you have anything before
General Phillips comes on?

MR. HOLT: I'd just like to remind everybody to -- when it comes your
turn, we're going to go in line with the -- in the order that you called in, so
be sure and identify yourself and your -- and your blog, your publication. So
with that, I think we're ready.

So, General Phillips, the floor is yours now.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Okay, I really appreciate it.

As we mentioned a little while ago, I am from Cleveland, Ohio. Came on
active duty going on 28 years ago, and I have to say, about the past four and my
over two years in Iraq have probably been the most challenging but also the most
rewarding. And I've been working with the Iraqi police since 2003, stood up the
Baghdad police academy in January 2004.

And now that I've been back over here for about seven months, I have to
say that the generation of the Iraqi police is going to be critical to any long-
term sustainment of security in this country. And really, the proof of principle
that we're seeing now is along with the surge of U.S. forces is also the surge

of the Iraq police within the Baghdad area. And we're seeing -- we've seen about a 50 percent reduction in violence in the city, and just recently, when I was out yesterday, I saw a lot more children on the roads.

And that's really how I gauge things over here, through my time, is how many children are on the roads. Are they out there playing? And really, what is -- what's the way all of the people look? How are they looking? You know, is there any waving? Is there -- is there commerce going on? And I have to say, yesterday Baghdad looked a lot more normal than it has in a very long time.

Thanks.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Thank you very much. And I'd once again like to welcome you to the Bloggers Roundtable this morning. Brigadier General David Phillips, who's the deputy commanding general for the civilian police assistance training -- transition team, training team.

And Andrew Lubin, you were first online, so why don't you get us started? Q Great. General -- (inaudible) -- stay away from Cleveland and bring you back to Baghdad. Andrew Lubin from U.S. Cavalry OnPoint, and we appreciate you taking the time with us.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Thank you.

Q Sir, in the past couple months, most of the news out of Baghdad and out of Iraq has been the Shi'a-Sunni violence. How are you able to winnow out the Shi'a militia who are trying to sneak in and infiltrate the IPs?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Okay, that's a really difficult mission because, as you know, in the past we never really asked, "What sect are you from? Are you Sunni or are you Shi'a?" Basically did not want to be impolite. "Are you Catholic or -- Protestant?" The same type of question; you just don't routinely ask over here, as an opening statement. But now we actually do attempt to manage by the sectarian demographics. Very difficult at times, because even the Iraqi personnel do not like to log them that way. So we take the hiring lists and we will go down and by name you can many times be very close to figuring whether the individual, strictly by their name, is Shi'a or is Sunni.

Now, when we recruit from a specific area, we're getting local police from a local community. If that community is heavily Shi'a, the chances are you are going to -- you know, everyone's going to be Shi'a. But then you also may have some favoritism shown towards -- (word inaudible) -- Mahdi and the militias that you referred to.

So although we try to instill values in the training, we try to set a role model for them -- training's the key to this, it's -- sometimes, when they are finished training, they go back to their local community, they're under the same pressures that they were before they came in. And you can see some do slide back under the influences of the militias. But it's a continual process.

Iraq also has an internal affairs section which -- and I'm very proud of. They've come a long way, over the years. The individual who's in charge of it is very aggressively pursuing any human rights violations by police. And, surprisingly, they are actually turning over cases to an investigative judge and they've had -- well, last month alone, well over 30 convictions for different types of violations of human rights. And that could be anywhere from roughing somebody up in an arrest all the way down to some pretty significant things.

MR. HOLT: Okay, sir. Thank you very much.

Q Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Let's see, here. Matt Armstrong.

Q Good afternoon. Thank you. This is Matt Armstrong from Mountain Runner. General -- GEN. PHILLIPS: Hi, Matt.

Q Good morning. Thanks.

The Iraqi police, complemented by the emergency response units (that ?) were trained by USIS, there have been a number of contracts with other companies to train the Iraqi army and the Iraqi police. And many of these have been fairly challenging, it seems, in the outcome. Has the USIS -- how has the USIS contract worked out? there have been six different security training schemes for the Iraqi police and special police commandos, ERU, et cetera. Several have evolved into fairly bad outcomes. Are you working to coordinate this training better, stronger? What are you looking at for the near future?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Well, in the specific unit you're referring to and that contract there, we also have U.S. military mentors and coaches out there, and also transition teams that go with the ERU when they go on missions, both training missions and real operational missions. And I have to say that unit there is a fairly effective unit. The training that they're receiving is first-class training.

They've recently had about 600 recruits, of which they were only going to accept 200 to even begin the training process. So they had a very steep learning curve, very steep weeding out of any undesirables.

And I have to say, these were not necessarily average undesirable people; it's just they could not maintain the rigors that are expected over there with the emergency response unit, the national emergency response unit. And recently that unit reacted and responded to Karbala on very short notice.

No unit's perfect. Every unit is going to have some problem individuals, but I'm pretty proud of this one here. And I think that the ERUs overall that we have out in other provinces are also fairly effective, in particular down in Hillah. The Hillah SWAT -- and it is not a small team; it is a significant-sized unit -- is a very effective unit and has been rooting out -- (word inaudible) -- Mahdi, members of the militia down there, because predominantly that's who they're fighting there. The ERU up here, though, not only has taken action against militia members, it has also taken some significant action against the AQI, al Qaeda. So they're trained to do that.

But to go back to the very beginning part of what you said in a contractor training, I would say, from what I have seen, all the way from military police teaching the very first police courses to now, some very high-speed contractors, the best instructors are Iraqi instructors. Once we train the trainer and they teach their own, I believe that we see, you know, the best instruction comes out of that. And we are moving very quickly. All of their academies now are taught by Iraqis. We have U.S. coaches and mentors there and international police advisers, but the platform instruction are Iraqi police.

Q Thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir.

And Bruce.

Q General, Bruce McQuain with QandO.net. My question goes to the training itself, and it's -- it's sort of a, I guess, a broad question.

You obviously pull new recruits into an IP officer training facility, and you do their training. Once they come out of that training, what is the follow-up training? How do you monitor their progress? How do you do relevant follow-up training? How do you get them from the point they leave there to the point that you say they are a fully trained police officer? GEN. PHILLIPS: Okay. As you know, in the United States it usually takes several years to train a policeman. After they come out of their academy, they then go under the tutelage of a senior officer, and normally they grow into the position. Over here, we do not have the luxury of multiple years to do that. But if I could delineate, an Iraqi police officer is actually a lieutenant, and they go up in rank, and their basic instruction is a three-year course. But because of the fact we have to produce a significant number of police officers -- because only officers can make the apprehension over here -- we have gone to an OCS class with the Iraqis to where they are taking individuals with four-year college degrees and they go through a nine- month transition course.

But now the average policeman you see on the street, the basic policeman, is not an officer. They can detain, but they can't make arrests. They have an eight-week training program of instruction and they go through all the basics of policing in a democratic society, Iraqi law, all the way down to survival techniques in some of the situations they'll experience over here. Once they come out of that eight weeks training, we then have -- at the police stations we have military police still in just about all of the police stations in Baghdad who continue to run follow-up courses. We also have the higher institute at the Baghdad police academy that teaches specialty courses.

But one of our biggest issues right now would be follow-up training of a basic eight-week-trained policeman, just because of the sheer numbers of which we are attempting to produce. And the fact is, if you don't continue to reinforce the training, you know, then bad habits can be learned or some of the good things can be forgotten.

You have asked a very good question. It's one of our more difficult missions, the continued follow-up training to continue increasing. But the Iraqi police also have their own trainers out at the stations, and they do do inservice training. Probably not the level that you would like to see, but I have to say it's out there and they're doing it. But then, how many cities are experiencing police officers -- in a city the size of Baghdad are experiencing an insurgency like this, but yet expect it to be, you know, average police officers. So they're doing the best they can right now.

Q Thank you.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Thanks

MR. HOLT: And John.

Q Well, this is John Donovan, sir. I'm -- I saw from the stuff that Jack put out yesterday that I was a little sparse in my bio. This

question is coming from my military background as a trainer and my master's in criminal justice. And unfortunately, Bruce really took most of my question, so you're a brilliant man, Bruce.

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Q (In progress) -- This question is coming from my military background as a trainer and my Master's in criminal justice. And unfortunately, Bruce really took most of my question -- so you're a brilliant man, Bruce.

The point being, though, how are we trying to mentor and grow the senior NCO midlevel officer in that group? If you've got anything to add to that, as opposed to what you said covering Bruce's question, because you actually answered most of my question, I think.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Well, you know, an NCO -- it's something that's relatively new to Iraq. They have not had a significant NCO corps in either their army or police forces before the war. And now, we are attempting to grow the noncommissioned officer corps within the police. In the national police we're much more successful, because it's more like a military -- well, it is like a military unit. They have battalions, brigades, divisions. But in the regular police, down at the departmental level, we do continual training down there when the military police come in. And all of those police transition teams have army military police noncommissioned officers. So there's a role model there.

The other part is we are standing up and we do have several courses ongoing that are advanced courses for noncommissioned police to come to. But the numbers -- we're talking small classes -- 50 to 60 at a time, whereas in Baghdad alone we have tens of thousands of police. So difficult mission. We've got a ways to go on -- although they have seen the benefits in the noncommissioned officer corps, because the officers take so long to train.

Q Thank you, sir. It's one of our better legacies if we can make it work -- is that whole concept of the senior NCO.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Absolutely.

MR. HOLT: And I believe we had a couple more folks join us on the line. Are there any -- who might that be?

Q Jarred Fishman's on.

MR. HOLT: Okay, Jared, to your question.

Q Thank you, sir, for taking the time out.

Could you tell us, when we do up our reports -- I do a good news from the Iraqi surge each week -- what are the one or two major things that you would want the American public to know which hasn't really been getting out there to demonstrate the progress that's being made on the ground?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Yesterday morning I sat next to Deputy Minister Aideen (ph) on one side and Deputy Minister Hussein Ali Whadi (ph) from -- as a matter of fact I've got to get -- Ali Whadi (ph) -- the two key deputy ministers in the Ministry of the Interior. And we were sitting and Mr. Bolani -- the minister of the Interior -- was down from us and we watched 744 brand-new Iraqi police graduate from the Baghdad Police College.

The interesting point of this graduation was they were 100 percent Sunni and the fact is they were training in an area that has a high density of Shi'a. I'm sorry -- we just had an interruption here. Okay. But anyhow, let me go back -- we just had one of the other lines ring here.

I sat there at the graduation and watched these 744 Sunni graduate. And the interesting part is they came from the community of Abu Ghraib, which in the past, oh, about year, we have had a very difficult time even filling police stations with police officers. So this graduating class was substantial. Coupled with that we have an 1,000 Sunni policemen undergoing training out in the Abu Ghraib area at a temporary academy that we set up. So we're talking almost 2,000 new police officers -- the other group will graduate in a few days -- within a manner of just a short order, within two months. And some of these individuals were unemployed, but when we went to hire them we had probably three times as many as the almost 2,000 that were able to be hired and trained.

So a community which in the past we saw a significant al Qaeda presence now has concerned local citizens come forward, are joining the police forces.

And I watched that graduation ceremony and you saw a lot of pride in these new policemen as they graduated. And there were a lot of senior Iraqi officials there watching it. So I would say that was an absolute good news story. And a lot of the Arab media actually did cover the event.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Thank you very much, sir.

Anyone else?

Q Yes. This is Christian Lowe from Military.com.

MR. HOLT: Okay. All right, Christian.

Q Hi. General Phillips, I don't know if anyone asked about this earlier, I joined the interview a couple minutes late, but what was your take on the Jones report and its findings that at least the national police should be disbanded?

GEN. PHILLIPS: I've worked with the national police since their inception. I consider myself a personal friend of the commander of the national police. He was a 30-year veteran of the Iraqi army. He is dedicated. He taught at their war college. And he has taken pride in that organization and I have watched as he has purged all but one of the senior leaders for some type of wrong. It could be anywhere from corruption to militia influence to just in mere fact an ineffective leader. He has now taken -- if it's a brigade commander the deputy is a different sect. So if you have a Sunni commander you have a Shi'a deputy.

I've also seen him take some initiatives to clean out the units. We've been running them through training down at Numaniyah. We only have one more brigade to go. I think you were possibly online yesterday when we talked about the Carabinieri and how they're going to come down and offer training. And the fact of disbanding them I think would be not only an Iraqi decision, because it's their decision to make, but I think it would be a mistake, because a majority of those units are effective. Yes, they've got some problems in there, but I have faith in their leader and he really is pushing forward some pretty significant initiatives.

Q Okay. Can I ask one other quick question? You know, you talked about how effective the sort of special tactics teams, the SWAT teams are in Hillah and some other places. To what extent are you making sure that these Iraqi police -- at least local police or especially local police units -- are not outgunned? I mean, there were several incidents over the last few years where police, you know, the police departments were just overrun by the bad guys. What have you guys done make sure that those -- that that will not happen again?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Well, the Iraqi national police have some heavier weapons and can react. But let's use, for example, outside of Baghdad where you don't have the national police readily available and you have an average Iraqi -

Q Sure.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Unfortunately, they have side arms, they have Kalashnikov rifles and they have also some lower-caliber and some medium machine guns. But at times, yes, they could be outgunned out in those stations. But we're training policemen to try to do a law enforcement role within an insurgency and we have not equipped them with heavier weaponry.

There's a training issue that comes with that. And it's a very good point. If I was in the station I would probably want something heavier to go against someone coming with an RPG. But that is a problematic issue we have

between level of training and then also what we're expecting them to do out there. At times are they outgunned? Yes. Yeah, they are outgunned at times.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Any follow-up questions?

Q I have one quickly. General, Andrew Lubin again.

Are you pushing the Shi'a back into the specific -- the areas where they're coming from or are you trying to mix and match and just kind of put them where they're necessary?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Well, we're actually -- we, as a coalition, are trying to get the Iraqi government to allow people to live where they have historically lived. And people that have been displaced because of those type issues we are now attempting to get back into their areas by recruiting local policemen, so that you have your own policemen in your area, so that you can go back to your neighborhood.

It's a bigger problem than -- it is a big problem, but right now in Baghdad we're getting control of a lot of the communities. We are seeing a significant downward turn in violence and we are seeing some of the mixed communities coexisting much better than they were about six months ago. It is a difficult thing, though, when somebody comes in and asks you to leave your house. A militia comes in and says, "Leave or you'll be killed." That is a problem. We have had people leave country, but recently we have had a great number come back. One in particular is a doctor who worked for the Iraqi police. We hired him very early on in 2003 and he stood up the original internal affairs. About 2005 he had to flee for his life with his family, but is recently come back and now he is looking to go back into the government and work with the police, because he said he'd watched from Jordan long enough and it was his turn to come back and try to, you know, get things fixed over here so his family will ultimately be able to come back. That's one individual in a country, but I think he's just a representative of what we see as the tip of the iceberg with people coming back.

Q Great. Thank you very much -- very good news story.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Thanks.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Any other questions?

All right, sir.

General Phillips, we've got a few minutes left here. Have you got a closing statement, closing thoughts for us?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Yeah, I would like to take one of the issues -- thank you for the opportunity. Currently, we are recruiting more police recruits than we actually have the ability -- or the Iraqis, I should say -- have the ability to train and equip. Literally, I walked away from a briefing yesterday with the Deputy Minister Aideen (ph), who is responsible for the Iraqi police, and he just showed me 3,000 more recruits were being hired out in Al Anbar, 5,000 up in Diyala and I have a list that goes on and we're talking in the thousands in different areas.

And the issue is we'll have no problem filling all of those slots. If anything, we are turning away literally hundreds, if not thousands of people, in some areas who want to join the police forces. And what we're doing with many of those, we then are equipping them with a baseball cap, a little bit of training and they become concerned local citizens. And what they do is they are waiting their turn to attempt to go into the army or into the police and they are guarding their own community as a nighttime -- what we have in the states, you know, community watch. And we're seeing that that's very effective because we equip them with a cell phone and they pick up and use that cell phone and give us some very good actionable Intel which we are able to take action with. But the concerned local citizens is basically -- almost like a police auxiliary that we have in the states -- not as trained as much, but we've got them in their communities watching, because they know who belongs and who doesn't belong.

Thanks for the opportunity to be able to speak with all of you today. And thanks so much for your support. We sure can feel it over here. And it's overall been really good. I'm very optimistic about the next couple of weeks.

Thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right. Thank you very much, sir.

Brigadier General David Phillips with us on the Bloggers' Roundtable this morning -- the deputy commander general of the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team from Baghdad, Iraq.

Thank you very much, sir.

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